

# **Governor Announces State Partnership with Weinberg Foundation to Increase Rental Housing Options for Persons with Disabilities**

## **Weinberg Foundation to invest \$1 million over two years - independent living is focus of grant**

**CROWNSVILLE, MD (May 9, 2011)** - Flanked by Weinberg Foundation Chairman Donn Weinberg, Governor Martin O'Malley today announced the "Affordable Rental Housing Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities" initiative which includes Weinberg Foundation funding of \$1 million. The joint venture with the Weinberg Foundation was facilitated by the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) and includes the Maryland Departments of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). Under a Memorandum of Understanding, the Weinberg Foundation and the state departments will work together to finance affordable, quality, independent, integrated housing opportunities for very low income persons with disabilities who meet certain eligibility criteria.

"The most vulnerable in our society are the hardest hit during challenging economic times such as this one. As you can imagine, there is great demand for affordable housing for people with disabilities," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "The public-private partnership that we celebrate today moves us closer to our goal of increasing independent affordable rental housing opportunities for our friends and neighbors who live with a disability."

"This grant permits the State of Maryland to begin to fill a gap in the coverage of housing programs designed to benefit low income individuals, by helping some 'very' low income disabled individuals," said Donn Weinberg, Weinberg Foundation Chairman of the Board. "Although this grant will help only a small percentage of this community, it is a much-needed beginning - a down-payment, if you will, on what we hope can become a trend in our state and our nation. The Foundation is proud to be seen as a national leader in housing for people with disabilities."

The Weinberg Foundation will provide \$1 million over two years to be used as grant funds to cover capital costs in developments otherwise receiving DHCD financing. DHCD will refer interested nonprofit owners of projects receiving DHCD funding awards to the Weinberg Foundation for consideration. The Foundation, in coordination with DHCD, will determine the number of "Weinberg Apartments" within the development, which is expected to be five to ten percent of the total units. Once the Foundation approves a property, it will transfer its funding to DHCD and the department will be responsible for closing the financing, disbursing the funds for construction, and monitoring the project for compliance with the long-term Weinberg unit requirements. The first Weinberg units are expected to be available for occupancy in late 2012.

Weinberg units will house nonelderly disabled households at 15-30% AMI who pay 30% of their income for rent. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will qualify eligible disabled households and refer tenants to the units on lease-up and turnover. The Department of Housing and Community

Development will work with DHMH and MDOD on a referral process similar to that of the Bridge Subsidy Demonstration Program to ensure that the units are made available to very-low income persons with a range of disabilities who are prepared and ready to be successful living independently. The Bridge Subsidy Demonstration Program assisted persons with disabilities to live independently by providing short-term rental assistance while the person awaited permanent housing assistance, generally a federal housing choice voucher. State-funded at \$2.1 million, the Bridge Program assisted 110 persons with disabilities.

"Our history with the Weinberg Foundation has been a productive one as evidenced by our work together on the Weinberg Manor and Village projects as well as Dayspring," said DHCD Secretary Raymond A. Skinner. "We applaud their commitment to the concept of independent living for people with disabilities and, also, anticipate that this partnership will position Maryland to be competitive for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's new Section 811 program funding in 2012."

"A solid home environment can be the foundation for a better life," says Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Secretary of DHMH. "These affordable housing opportunities will change lives and communities for the better."

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The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development works with partners to finance housing opportunities and revitalize great places for Maryland citizens to live, work and prosper. To learn more about DHCD programs, log on to [www.mdhousing.org](http://www.mdhousing.org).

News updates also are available by following DHCD on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/MDHousing](http://www.twitter.com/MDHousing)) and Facebook ([www.facebook.com/marylandhousing](http://www.facebook.com/marylandhousing)).

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